

in circumstances beyond their control and legitimately need temporary help. However, as we all know, far too many individuals abuse the system, making public assistance a way of life. This amendment is designed to crack down on the persistent fraud problems that plague our welfare system.

It is estimated that welfare overpayments represent about 4 percent of payments paid by AFDC, food stamp, and Medicaid programs. Many of these overpayments are due to deliberate fraud. This type of abuse is an insult both to hard-working taxpayers who struggle daily without Government assistance as well as families on welfare who play by the rules.

Currently, a similar tax intercept is reducing fraud successfully in the Food Stamp Program in 32 States. My amendment would create a similar model for AFDC. It is also designed to protect taxpayer privacy.

Just as important, my amendment would save States at least \$250 million, enabling them to use the savings for those who truly need assistance. The most recent estimate of this proposal was done in 1992, when the United Council on Welfare Fraud estimated that States could save \$49 million per year. If a similar analysis were done today, I expect the savings from my amendment would be even greater.

I am pleased this amendment will be accepted. It means getting tough on the cheats who abuse our welfare system.

I also ask unanimous consent that Senator BRYAN be added as an original cosponsor of my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PRESSLER. I thank my colleague for his cosponsorship and support and leadership in this area.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be joining with Senator PRESSLER as a cosponsor on this amendment to provide States the option to use the IRS Federal income tax refund intercept process to try to recapture AFDC-type benefit overpayments.

Some years ago, Congress provided for an IRS Federal income tax intercept process to be used to help retrieve child support payment arrearages. When an individual is in arrears on his or her child support payments, the IRS refund intercept allows the State to notify the IRS of the arrearage. If the individual is to receive a Federal income tax refund, the IRS can intercept the refund. Rather than having the tax refund go directly to the individual, the refund amount is intercepted and paid toward the child support arrearage.

As I know a number of my colleagues have also done in their home States, I have spent significant time this year visiting welfare offices in both northern and southern Nevada. During those visits, I spent a significant amount of time listening to welfare eligibility workers. It surprised me to learn from

these eligibility workers that State welfare agencies did not have the authority to notify the IRS to intercept Federal income tax refunds to try to recapture benefit overpayments for AFDC-type cash assistance.

My experience in spending time with those who are actually involved in the welfare program, who administer it on a day-to-day basis, has been enormously helpful to me. They have helped explain some of the complexities in our welfare system, some of its inconsistencies and some of its frustrations that welfare workers experience when our best intended policies are hopelessly inconsistent, or when they find their hands tied because of some nonsensical rule that requires them to do certain things.

This is why I am particularly pleased to join on as an original cosponsor of the Pressler-Bryan amendment. This amendment provides an answer to one of those frustrations. When benefit overpayments are made in AFDC-type cash assistance programs under this bill, State welfare agencies will now have the IRS refund intercept process available to them.

Unfortunately, many times welfare recipients who receive benefit overpayments, and most frequently this occurs in the AFDC program, are able to walk away knowing they are not going to have to repay the benefit overage. Those individuals essentially have been unjustly enriched as a result of a fraudulent overpayment made to them. When they later qualify for a Federal income tax refund, the States are powerless to try to intercept that refund, and recapture the money rightfully due the State.

Under the amendment offered by the Senator from South Dakota and myself, we now add a new category to cover those individuals who have received benefit overpayment by reason of their fraud, or for whatever reason the circumstances led to the overpayment. Now States are empowered, through the IRS, to intercept any tax refund check that would otherwise be paid to that welfare recipient. And as the Senator from South Dakota has pointed out, the amount of savings to the taxpayers is enormous. This amendment makes a lot of sense. Expanding the IRS refund intercept process to AFDC-type benefit overpayments makes common sense, and allows all States greater flexibility in the administration of the welfare system.

I applaud the Senator for his leadership and associate myself with his comments on this important amendment. This is the kind of bipartisan work that I am delighted to participate in, and which can help make this welfare reform proposal workable for the States.

I thank my colleague. I yield the floor.

Mr. PRESSLER addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. PRESSLER. If we could deal with this amendment, it has been cleared on both sides of the aisle. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of amendment 2501.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows.

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. PRESSLER] proposes an amendment numbered 2501.

Mr. PRESSLER. I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in the Friday, September 8, 1995, edition of the RECORD.)

Mr. PRESSLER. I urge adoption of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the amendment? If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

So the amendment (No. 2501) was agreed to.

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. CHAFEE. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, it takes no rocket scientist to be aware that the U.S. Constitution forbids any President to spend even a dime of Federal tax money that has not first been authorized and appropriated by Congress—both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

So when a politician or an editor or a commentator pops off that "Reagan ran up the Federal debt" or that "Bush ran it up," bear in mind that the Founding Fathers, two centuries before the Reagan and Bush presidencies, made it very clear that it is the constitutional duty solely of Congress—a duty Congress cannot escape—to control Federal spending.

Thus, it is the fiscal irresponsibility of Congress that has created the incredible Federal debt which stood at \$4,962,703,726,882.93 as of the close of business Friday, September 8. This outrageous debt—which will be passed on to our children and grandchildren—averages out to \$18,838.51 for every man, woman, and child in America.